



Housing PEOPLE

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Budget delivers \$2.2b - a step in the right direction.

In a climate of increasingly uncertain economic times, the Federal Government handed down its first budget in May. It stuck to its election promises, but many economists believe the Government was too soft, and that whilst pain may have been deferred, it will be felt even more deeply later on.

So, what does the budget mean for social housing?

In fulfilling its election promises, an allocation of \$2.2b (over 4 years) was made to tackle housing affordability and homelessness.

Joint media releases from Ministers Tanya Plibersek and Jenny Macklin outlined the following initiatives:

- **National Rental Affordability Scheme** - Up to 50,000 new rental properties will be created at a cost of \$622.6m over the next four years.
- **Housing Affordability Fund** to lower the cost of building new homes, with an emphasis on proposals that improve the supply of new entry-level housing. This fund invests \$359m in 2008 - 2009, totaling \$512m over the next five years.
- **First Home Saver Accounts** to help people save for their first home in which to live. A combination of a Government contribution and low taxes, costing \$1.2b over four years.
- **A Place to Call Home** strategy - \$100m over the next four years (with another \$50m in 2012/13), to build 600 new homes for the homeless across the nation.

In conjunction with Minister for the Environment Peter Garrett, Tanya Plibersek also announced:

- **Landlord rebates** of up to \$500 to install insulation, with renters saving money on energy costs.

Also from Peter Garrett:

- **Low Interest Green Loans** up to \$10,000 for home

owners to install solar, water and energy efficient products in their homes.

According to the Australian Greens, the budget was a step in the right direction towards solving the housing crisis, but there's still a long way to go.

Senator Rachel Siewert stated that "The Rudd Government has set down a good foundation by addressing some of the long term problems associated with the current housing crisis. We need the Government to take an active role in supporting not only those finding it difficult to buy a house, but those who cannot even afford to rent," she said.

National Shelter also commends the Government on its dedication to the initiatives launched, but it too criticises Labour's obligation to some of the most pressing issues facing housing at this time.

Chair of National Shelter, Adrian Pisarski, has said that while all areas of housing need to be addressed, Public Housing is currently under the most stress and "has been blatantly disregarded in this budget".

The Housing Industry Association were more positive, with HIA managing director Ron Silberberg saying the measures aimed at boosting the supply of new housing, along with desperately needed urban infrastructure, will assist in pegging the gap between underlying demand and current production.

Shadow Assistant Treasurer, Michael Keenan MP, called on the Labor Government to revise its National Rental Affordability Scheme, which he said in its current form is "a complicated mess that could drive up rents for Australian families".

Mr Keenan said Labor's rental affordability scheme will be unworkable and will not succeed.

So, what's the AHI's position?

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Chief Executive Officer Joan Ferguson commented that "It's a positive budget, and we welcome the initiatives that have been announced. The AHI is looking forward to working with the Federal government to meet the challenges of shaping a modern housing system. We

acknowledge that the Rudd Government can only do so much in its first budget. The challenge for us is to press for improved funding and new, innovative policy arrangements for social housing across the board in future budgets."

Consultation Process for Green Paper on Homelessness

The Prime Minister and Minister for Housing launched the Government's Green Paper 'Which Way Home? A New Approach to Homelessness' at the Homelessness Conference in Adelaide in May.

You can have input into the public discussion on homelessness by participating in a number of ways.

1. Participate in one of public consultation forums being held around Australia on the following dates:

Perth	28 May	Melbourne	12 June
Karatha	29 May	Canberra	13 June
Townsville	4 June	Lismore	16 June
Darwin	6 June	Hobart	17 June
Brisbane	10 June	Adelaide	19 June
Sydney	11 June	Albury - Wodonga	20 June

Places are limited, so register now for one of the forums by calling 1800 774 055 (a free call).

2. Make an online submission

Go to the Homelessness Green Paper Submission Page at <http://homelessness.nationalmailing.com.au/> and register to make an online submission.

Note: Closing time for receiving submissions is Friday 20th June 5:00pm EST.

3. Post a submission to:

Homelessness Green Paper Submissions
PO Box 7442
CANBERRA ACT 2610

To receive a copy of the Green Paper, summary, a hardcopy submission form, or for enquiries, contact 1800 774 055 (free call).

Contributions will inform the development of the White Paper to be released in September 2008. The White Paper will set out the Government's plan of action for the next 10 years.

The AHI will be making its own submission on the Green Paper, and would love to have input from members. Email your comments to: Angela.Percy@housinginstitute.org

Meet New Member - Jill Simpson, Housing NSW

Jill commenced work with Housing NSW in February this year as General Manager of the Housing Contact Centre (HCC), a 24x7 contact and processing centre with around 160 staff. Jill has an extensive background in call centre and customer service management, in areas as diverse as travel, banking and the public sector.

Her previous position was Manager Customer Service, City of Sydney, with responsibility for running of Council's front end services (five offices and a call centre), as well as identifying initiatives across Council to improve service delivery.

So why choose to move into housing?

Jill responded, "I have always been attracted to jobs and companies where I have felt I could make a difference to the customer. I am passionate about customer service in all its forms. I'm very proud to say that I'm employed by an organisation that works with some of our most disadvantaged citizens, and ensures that the most important basic need – a roof over their head – is met. I'm happy to say that the HCC receives many compliments about the service we provide as well as the support the

Department provides generally.

I had no idea before I started work here just how complicated our business is and the large number of stakeholders in everything we do. It's an invigorating environment where I will learn a lot, but I'll also be able to make a contribution because of my past experience.

Jill emigrated to Australia with her family as '10 pound poms', and reflects that "...my parents struggled with the culture change and leaving their family behind. It must be so much harder for those who don't speak English when they arrive. In my current role I can influence how we help new immigrants to access the services of the Department and make at least one part of their lives a little simpler".

Living in Canberra and working in Sydney means Jill doesn't have a great deal of spare time. What time she does have is spent helping her sons embrace bureaucracy (she says Gen Ys hate paperwork), and researching her family tree. She said that luckily her partner shares her addictions of playing computer-based strategy games and watching Star Trek, which, according to Jill, is how they've successfully managed their relationship.

Branch Committee News

Victoria from Andrew MacGregor We are progressing preparations for our three seminar series on housing affordability and expanding the supply of affordable housing. The first of these seminars titled 'housing affordability: cyclical problem or structural mess...and what to do about it' is a breakfast event scheduled for 24 June (see Diary dates, page 4). The seminar series is being held in conjunction with the Planning Institute of Australia, and we are very pleased that David Imber and Kath Hulse have agreed to present at the first event. The Chair of the Planning Institute's Victorian Social Planning Chapter has also agreed to MC the first event, and Planning Institute members will be awarded professional development points for attending. We have speakers lined up already for event two on taxation policy, which is great.

We are also considering two further events for Victorian members - one on the National Rental Affordability Scheme, and another on the newly created National Housing Supply Council.

Queensland from Nicole Randall The 2008 Queensland branch committee sprang into action early in the year, organising a highly successful rental forum held in February. The forum saw Dr Tim Seelig from the UQLD and Janet Arber from the Residential Tenancies Authority discuss trends in the private rental market. Over 40 people attended the forum to hear the latest with this ever-changing housing tenure.

Next came a seminar with Professor David Mullins, Professor of Housing Policy at the University of Birmingham, held in March. Professor Mullins was in Australia for the National Housing Conference, so we took the opportunity to host a Brisbane forum on social housing trends in England.

Plans for the rest of 2008 include organising a session on the National Affordable Housing Agreement, and hosting breakfasts featuring interesting social housing speakers.

NSW from Unis Goh The NSW branch has just held a breakfast session in Newcastle, with 31 people attending, including 9 non-AHI members.

In August we'll be hosting a workshop by Lynden Esdaile, Churchill Fellowship recipient in 2007, who has looked at approaches to homelessness in the UK, Ireland, Canada. Our focus this year is to continue building up our membership numbers, because as an NGO, size is important for pooling the talents and growing a stronger voice in policy debate and professional development.

South Australia Branch meetings have included speakers on topics including urban regeneration and environmental sustainability.

In June, Joan Ferguson will be presenting a seminar on outcomes-based performance measures for social housing. Titled 'Performance Measures - an opportunity to tell the great social housing story', this seminar will provide insight into how performance measures can help individuals in their work.

The Branch is also planning to organise a bus tour of inner city housing services in July.

Industry News



Malcolm Downie has been a member of the Institute since 2000. He was a Director in 2001, then served two years as President (2005-07) and is currently co-opted to the Board as the immediate Past President.

Malcolm has worked in social housing within Tasmania and South Australia for 25 years, and has had responsibility for all aspects of social housing operations - strategic policy, tenancy and asset management, and development and delivery of capital works programs.

He was Director of Housing Tasmania between 2001 - 2003 and General Manager of the South Australian Housing Trust from 2003 - 2008. He is therefore well positioned to tackle his latest challenge, moving into local government as Manager Affordable Housing with the Adelaide City Council. The Council is positioning itself to develop a number of exciting residential projects within the CBD of Adelaide, and to take advantage of the incentives being provided by both the Commonwealth and State governments to deliver affordable sale and rental properties. Malcolm has been an active supporter of the Institute over many years and firmly believes in the need for a professional body to provide the necessary linkages for volunteers and workers in the social housing industry, and to provide opportunities to develop and update their skills to meet current challenges.

He is happily ensconced in the Adelaide foothills with four grandchildren living close by, and after years of sailing in both inshore and offshore events (including two Sydney to Hobarts on 35 footers - akin to being in a washing machine for 5 days - not pretty!) has taken up the game of golf at the local Belair Park Club. The Golf Club is located within the Belair National Park, so at least he can enjoy the sights and sounds of native fauna and flora while searching for his ball.

Congratulations

to AHI members Dr Owen Donald and Professor Judy Yates on their appointment to the National Housing Supply Council (NHSC). Dr Donald has been appointed as the first chair of the NHSC, and Ms Yates is one of the Council's eight expert members.

The Council has been formed to assist the government assess the current and future demand for housing in Australia. According to Housing Minister, Tanya Plibersek, "The Council will publish an annual State of Supply report that will coordinate local, state and national supply and demand information, and adopt a consistent, national standard for measuring and assessing the supply of land and housing".

We look forward to hearing more about the work of the Council in the coming months.

Diary dates - Upcoming Events

AHI Events

Event	Location	Date
Working with complex and demanding clients (in house)	Kalgoorlie	3 June
Working with clients with drug/alcohol dependency (in house)	Kalgoorlie	4 June
Visit to Conservation House	Wellington, NZ	4 June
Working with clients with drug/alcohol dependency (in house)	Perth	5 June
Working with clients with drug/alcohol dependency (in house)	Perth	6 June
Mental Health First Aid (in house)	Liverpool, NSW	11 - 12 June
Mental Health First Aid (in house)	Liverpool, NSW	17 - 18 June
AHI WA Breakfast Forum with Shane Hamilton	Perth	18 June
Working with clients with drug/alcohol dependency (in house)	Launceston	24 June
AHI VIC Breakfast Forum - Housing affordability	Melbourne	24 June
Negotiation and Conflict Resolution Skills (in house)	Hobart	25 June
Mental Health First Aid (in house)	Liverpool, NSW	26 - 27 June
Working with clients with drug/alcohol dependency (in house)	Hobart	26 June
Mental Health First Aid (in house)	Liverpool, NSW	2 - 3 July
Talbot House Tour	Auckland NZ	03 Jul
Mental Health First Aid (in house)	Melbourne	14 - 15 July
Working with clients with drug/alcohol dependency	Brisbane	15 July
Mental Health First Aid (in house)	Adelaide	21 - 22 Jul
Rental Affordability Forum	Waitakere, NZ	22 July
Working with complex and demanding clients	Canberra	29 July
Working with clients with drug/alcohol dependency	Canberra	30 July

For more information about the above events, contact Tracey Acton on 02 6494 7566, email admin@housinginstitute.org or visit the AHI website at www.housinginstitute.org

Other Events

Affordable Housing workshops - NSW Centre for Affordable Housing RSVP essential - by 11 June	Byron Bay, NSW	4 June
For more information, contact the Centre for Affordable Housing on 02 8753 8185 or cah@housing.nsw.gov.au	Port Macquarie	18 June